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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000687

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: GOT CONSIDERING SENDING SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE TO
MARGARIAN FUNERAL

REF: A. ANKARA 642

[1](#)B. BANKS-BURGER EMAIL 3/26/07

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Turkey will likely send a senior MFA official to Armenian PM Margarian's March 28 funeral, MFA Deputy Undersecretary Cevikoz told the Charge. Given that the Akdamar Church opening ceremony is the following day, Cevikoz will push for the GOT to allow a direct Yerevan-Van flight to accommodate Armenians attending both events. He pledged to push for "sustainable" Turkey-Armenia ties, but said concrete steps will be impossible until after Turkey's parliamentary elections. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Charge contacted MFA Undersecretary (D-equivalent) Apakan March 26 to urge Turkey to send a senior representative to the funeral of Armenian PM Margarian, scheduled for March 28 (ref b). She then followed up by calling on Deputy Undersecretary Cevikoz the same day. Cevikoz asked that we confirm the funeral date, as the GOT had heard conflicting information from Yerevan (we did so). He reported that the GOT had made no decision yet on attendance, but added that MFA will urge the Turkish leadership to consider that Armenia had made a positive gesture by sending Deputy FonMin Kirakossian to the Hrant Dink funeral in January. He hinted that Turkey's response would be reciprocal, but added he might be dispatched instead of Apakan, Kirakossian's equivalent.

[1](#)3. (C) Charge noted that the funeral's timing may complicate plans for Armenians to travel to Van in Turkey's southeast for the March 29 opening ceremony of the Akdamar Church (ref a), especially since the GOT had declined to open the land border temporarily or to permit a direct Yerevan-Van flight. Cevikoz agreed that -- given the new situation -- he will urge the GOT to allow a direct flight to ensure Armenian participation. He argued that opening the border would have no effect, given the approximately five-hour drive time from the border to Van.

[1](#)4. (C) Reflecting on the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul's now-public request to the GOT to allow a cross to be erected on the Akdamar Church, Cevikoz said he thought this was only appropriate. However, to gain political cover MFA has asked the Ministry of Culture to formally investigate whether there used to be a cross on the church in the past. Cevikoz closed by stating that he working on genuine, concrete steps to make Turkey-Armenia "sustainable" in the future, but these steps will have to wait until after Turkey's parliamentary elections, which must occur by November. He reflected that Turkey is in a highly politicized state, with nationalism on the rise.

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